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'Paper Jungle' Cited In Congressional Study

By Edward S. Cohen
Staff Reporter

For many people it's only a small paper moon. For one Congressman, who for years has been studying the vagaries of paper and its multifarious ways, it's only a paperpushing world.

And he's tired of it. His name is Arnold Olsen, he's a Democrat from Montana, he's been fighting it for a long time, and finally this past week, just as the Federal paperwork jungle was closing in on him and his staff, he cried out to the public for help in his struggle against paperpushing.

Olsen, chairman of the House Civil Service Subcommittee on Census and Statistics, told the rest of us paperusers that when President Johnson asserted to Congress in his State of the Union message that we don't intend to be buried by anyone, he ought to have included "the Federal agencies and their paperwork."

One example of paperwork which particularly riles Olsen are "the 500 million forms a year which the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration now process in operating the new taxpayer numbering system." This would not be so bad, Olsen announced, but computers are adding to the paper flow when they in theory should reduce paperwork.

Olsen envisions himself as a sort of salvation for the in-

dividual citizen, the small businessman, and businesses in general. He says he's much concerned about the effects of "empire-building and paperpushing" on these groups.

Small companies, for instance, says Olsen, often do not have enough employees or bookkeepers to handle the reporting requirements of Federal or local government agencies. "This paperwork often means the difference between a profit and a loss to these small companies."

Olsen went on to support President Johnson's recent plea to his Cabinet officers that they should pay more attention to the management of their departments and agencies and "to cut out excessive paperwork because it breeds overstaffing."

The Montana Congressman, who's been around long enough to know what most of the paper is used for, said in his report that "a good place to start a review of what he calls 'the numbers game' is the IRS. "There must be a cheaper and easier way of keeping taxpayers honest than the paperwork jungle the Internal Revenue Service has created; you can spend more on a return than the revenue the Government ultimately will receive.

Olsen is not mad at everybody, though. He likes what the Interstate Commerce Commission was doing, when last year it reduced by one-half million reports its paperwork requirements of regulated carriers.

He also seemed pleased with some of the systems work of the Treasury Department and the Bureau of Old-Age and Survivors Insurance. The latter uses computer tape for the transmittal of records. Olsen said this makes a substantial reduction in paperwork.

